

up with an emergency room bill they cannot pay because they rushed their child to the hospital after a suicide attempt. Our service men and women returning from Iraq should not be handed a 1-800 number to treat a mental illness.

Passing this bill is both morally and economically right because delay not only affects individuals and families, but it also affects schools, businesses, and our communities. I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for this important bill. Today we can finally make mental health parity a reality.

TRIBUTE TO SUE BOSTON

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 25, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Sue Boston of Marshalltown, Iowa as the recipient of the Governor's Volunteer Award for her time spent volunteering in the Marshalltown Community School District.

The Governor's Volunteer Award program was established to honor and recognize volunteers for the commitment, service and time that they contribute to Iowa's government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Sue has volunteered with the Marshalltown Community School District for 20 years, contributing her time and talents to improving the lives of area students and the community as a whole.

I consider it a great honor to represent Sue Boston in the United States Congress, and I wish her the best as she continues to provide a positive impact on young people and her community in the years to come.

CONSOLIDATED SECURITY, DISASTER ASSISTANCE, AND CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2638, the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act for 2009. This bill provides vital funding for our national security needs by including regular appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. It also provides continuing funding for the regular operations of other areas of the Federal Government to prevent any interruption in vital services for our citizens.

As a veteran of the U.S. Army, I am proud that this bill keeps our commitments to our troops and their families, those who are serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas around the world and those who have served our Nation honorably in this war or previous times of strife.

H.R. 2638 provides \$487.7 billion for our military needs. It addresses equipment shortfalls for our troops, improves training, and ensures that our military men and women, and their families, receive first class medical care.

The bill increases military pay by 3.9 percent, rejects the President's attempts to increase TRICARE fees, and continues our commitment to the well-being of our soldiers. It provides critical support to the people who support our troops, making \$2.8 billion available for family advocacy, education, and daycare. It improves barracks and military hospitals with a \$734 million increase over the President's request, ensuring our soldiers have quality facilities when they serve our Nation.

Like the House-passed Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, H.R. 6599, this bill makes veterans a top priority. It includes a total of \$47.6 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, more than 10 percent over last year's appropriation. \$41 billion supports the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and Veterans Medical Services, which expects to serve more than 5.8 million patients next year. To improve access to care for our veterans, particularly in rural areas without a VHA facility, the bill provides \$200 million for fee-based providers where VHA services are not available. This bill also helps our soldiers returning today from Iraq and Afghanistan, increasing funding for traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder treatment, as well as supporting prosthetics and new prosthetic technology.

As the Representative of Fort Bragg, one of the largest United States Army bases in the country, I am pleased that this bill addresses the needs of our military installations. H.R. 2638 includes \$25 billion for military construction. With a commitment of \$8.8 billion, this bill addresses the costs of implementing the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), which is bringing unprecedented growth to Fort Bragg.

As a Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, I am pleased that this bill makes investments in our security needs while cutting funding for low priority and poorly managed programs. It also demands long-needed oversight for contracting and procurement to ensure taxpayer funds are well spent. Homeland security begins with hometown security, and this bill provides \$4.2 billion, nearly twice the funding requested by the President, for first responders who provide the first line of defense against disaster, whether natural or man-made. It provides funding for a record number of border patrol agents and other Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers, enhancing our ability to enforce our laws and keep our borders secure. The bill pays for 4,361 new CBP personnel and 1,400 more detention beds for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and adds \$1 billion for ICE's enforcement efforts and \$775 million for border security fencing and technology. Overall it includes nearly \$40 billion in funding to keep Americans secure and ensure that our Nation is prepared for every emergency.

H.R. 2638 provides additional money for Community Development Block Grants, Social Services Block Grants, and disaster relief to address the emerging needs of communities responding to recent natural disasters. It also provides an additional \$2.5 billion over last year for Pell Grants to prevent cuts that were facing college students in the middle of the year.

This is not a perfect bill, and compromises needed to be made in order to ensure our Nation's vital priorities can be addressed. I am disappointed that H.R. 2638 does not include any restrictions on offshore drilling, ending 25

years of Congressional protection for our beaches and shorelines, and allowing oil rigs to be built just three miles from our coast. I am disappointed that this bill does not include a balanced energy strategy, like that in the House-passed H.R. 6899, the Comprehensive American Energy Security and Consumer Protection Act, to give states control over their coastlines and target drilling and exploration in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) beyond 50 miles of our coastlines. I am disappointed that this bill does not significantly address our desperate need for school construction and modernization, as our schools are bursting at the seams and our economy could use the new jobs it would create. I am disappointed that in this time of financial crisis, this bill does not address state shortfalls for Medicaid and other pressing needs. I look forward to working to address these shortfalls when the 111th Congress takes up appropriations for the rest of FY2009 in the new year.

I support H.R. 2638, the Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act for 2009, and I urge my colleagues to join me in voting for its passage.

RECOGNIZING THE HONORABLE BUD CRAMER AND THE HONORABLE TERRY EVERETT ON THEIR RETIREMENT FROM CONGRESS

SPEECH OF

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

Mr. BONNER. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request to include the accompanying articles in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to supplement my remarks which were entered during the Special Order in honor of two Members of the Alabama Delegation who are retiring.

[From The Montgomery Advertiser, August 5, 2008]

CONGRESSMAN GARNERS PRAISE FOR LOCAL SUPPORT

(By Cosby Woodruff)

Congressman Terry Everett's support for Maxwell Air Force Base during his 16 years in Washington is one reason the River Region benefits from the base's \$1.6 billion annual impact, said the head of the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber President Randy George said Everett's impact on the area goes far beyond Maxwell, but any discussion of the congressman's legacy must start with the military.

"You can't take that away from him," George said. "He has been a major player on Maxwell."

George said Maxwell is one of Montgomery's biggest economic engines, but the base contributes to the region in ways that can't be measured in dollars and cents.

"The societal impact to our area is at least as important," George said. "It makes us cosmopolitan."

Everett, who is retiring after eight terms in Congress, spoke to the chamber for the last time as a congressman Monday at its Eggs & Issues breakfast series.

His speech focused more on national politics than on local economics, but he did say sectors of Alabama's economy are poised for growth—and he pointed to the space industry as one area that could have an impact in years to come.